



10 July – 6 Sept 2019

## JOEL TOMLIN: SPOKE EYE

Private View: Tues 9 July, 6–9pm

Belmacz is pleased to present Joel Tomlin's second solo exhibition at the gallery. Spoke Eye proposes art as a type of technology – something that crafts our becoming. Its forms could be those of ancient tools, odd relics or childhood toys. They sit as monuments to a fantastical weightiness, before all that was solid melted into air: *Bonfire*'s smoke plumes solidify to be more like cartoon speech bubbles than vapour; *Machine Gun* sprouts a second pistol head, posing itself as more absurd than fatal. Weaving together the lyrical impulse of folk objects and personal mythologies, the artist works across the mutable borderline between the comical and the sacred.

Joel Tomlin continues to refine his practice. Whilst canvas has transfigured into sculpture, Tomlin has maintained a steady focus on the anthropological events and humble objects that populate our crude imagination: a life size chariot, a bow and arrow, a billowing bonfire, rising embers, and a flowering shrub. Yet these are neither the creatures of the huntsman's forest or the shaman's sky. These are models of ideal forms mediated through ritual and desire. Tomlin's works suggest their status as a priori gestures – effigies without which the history of humankind would be rendered opaque.

Primarily working with cherry wood, oak, copper and bronze, Tomlin produces modular sculptures from raw and recycled materials. Introduced to England by Henry VIII's fruiterers for its sweetness, the straight grain and tight pore structure of the cherry tree allows the trunk's wood to move easily against the knife, especially within the wood heart. Yet it is rare that Tomlin uses a pristine cut of wood. Instead, the artist gleans the discarded debris of post-industrial landscapes which retain vestiges of a previous life. Tomlin establishes, like the vernacular craftsman, an aesthetic of necessity and renewal: he bends a rusted nail into a gun trigger in one sculpture, pinning the arrow to the bow with a match stick in another.

Within his work there is a tension between ferocity and care; both making and propagation necessitate a small terror to cut-back, whittle, shape, and carve. A second glance, however, discerns an inherent sensitivity to form and responsibility towards the lives of nonhuman kith. As the hand tool carves the wood, the knife handle shapes the hand in turn. Through the grain of wood, stained pigments bleed bearings of age and regeneration into the works. Against the grain, profane histories of materiality and civilisations converge.

**Joel Tomlin** (Born in 1969 in Sheffield, UK).

He studied painting at Chelsea College of Art. Recent solo exhibitions: *Apple, Dice, Knife*, with Paul Housley, Sothebys Stockholm, Sweden (2018); *Calyx Horse*, Belmacz, London (2015), *Unplanned Memories*, Transition Gallery, London (two person show, 2014); *Intoxicated*, Max Wigram, London (2005). Recent Group exhibitions include: *Backyard Sculpture*, Domobaal, London (2019), *point of view 2019*, Randan Barns, Hay (2019); *The Ashtray Show West*, Belmacz, London (2018), *If I Was Your Girlfriend: A Jam*, Belmacz, London (2018); *The Ashtray Show*, 4Cose, London, written contribution to William Morris Society, London (2017); *Humble as Hell*, Merz Barn, Elterwater (2017); *The Names*, Transition Gallery, London (2016); *A Bestiary*, Turf Projects, London (2015); *Ludic*, Herrick Gallery, London (2015); *Naturrelikt und Kunstkonstrukt*, Grafikmuseum Stiftung Schreiner, Bad Steben, Germany (2015); *Fourth Drawer Down*, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham (2014); *News from Nowhere*, William Morris Society, Kelmscott House, London (2014); *Lions on Water* and *Women in Love*, Belmacz, London (2013); *Selected Paintings and Sculpture*, Kronach, Germany (2013).

Joel lives and works in London.